1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
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the profane (since he gives an increasing proportion of his time to ritual activities), until finally he returns to where he first originated, the totemic well.

The father's dream at a child's birth is an expression of the relation of the ordinary to the sacred, since the dream announces a soul's entering the world of the living; and the mortuary ceremony is a ritualization of the relation of the once living soul[1] and also of his mourning kin to the world of the sacred and the dead. The mourning rites symbolize the relationship of these two realms in the beliefs of the Murngin.

This chapter will first describe, without interpretation except that of the natives, the mortuary rituals and afterwards present interpretative conclusions. It might be stated that when all the field material which is given here was collected the author had no idea of where the facts led, and it was only by an analysis of the material and by relating it to the rest of the social configuration that the general ideas concerning the aboriginal mourning rites were discovered.

II. Murngin Death, Mortuary and Mourning Ceremonies and Customs

When it is believed that a man is very close to death[2] his relatives gather about him and wail; some of them, in a plaintive voice, sing the garma water cycle of songs of his moiety and clan, the leader usually beating time on his singing sticks. The dying man is supposed to listen to these songs and to follow their suggestions; if he cannot understand what is being said, it is believed that the spirit of his marikmo (father's father) or his mari will come when he hears, and talk to the soul which is about to leave the body and instruct it on what it has to do.

"We sing these songs to make that soul a good one, so he won't hurt any of us." Sometimes when a man has been speared and is still alive a song is sung over him to tell him to die in the proper manner and not allow his soul to make any difficulties for those who are alive. A man who has been badly injured in a spear fight and thinks that he is about to die likes to have this singing because it soothes his pain and removes any worry about the disposition of his soul. "That fellow who has been speared says, 'There is no time for me to live now. I am

[1] All Murngin individuals possess two souls: one (warro) which is from the totem well and important, and the other which is a trickster (mokoi).

[2] See "The Moon and the Parrot Fish," Appendix VIII, Myths, a rather amusing story which accounts for death.

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the bereaved relatives to settle; the later digging up of the bones, the women's carrying them, and the final reburial give ample time for the emotions finally to adjust themselves to this major crisis. 182 765

An examination of the kinship structure alone, without any conception of the total social personality or social participation of the former member of the living group, shows that if a man's father-in-law, for example, is taken by death from the social group, part of the social structure of the bereaved man is removed—at least the content of that part of the structure is gone. This forces a considerable readjustment by the living son-in-law, not only to his dead kin but to the dead's other relatives who are also his own. It seems highly likely that the period of mourning corresponds fairly definitely to the period of readjustment of the social structure to this social loss. The best evidence of this is that a baby, particularly a newborn child which has little or no social personality and has not become a part of the social structure, frequently has no ceremony for its burial; the women dig a shallow hole, deposit the body in it, and cover it—and it is quickly forgotten.

The social personality of a woman is less developed than that of a man (she does not participate, for example, in large parts of the ritual or directly in any of the spiritual behavior of the group, et cetera). The ceremonies for her are much less elaborate than those for a man. The ordinary man has less made of his burial than a man renowned for his feats of war, unless he has been killed by a blood feud. The death of an ordinary man by the blood feud organizes the major antagonisms and creates strong solidarities in the surviving group of kinsmen and those of the killer. The man who has participated the most in his social structure—a man, for example, who has been a great fighter, a ceremonial leader of his clan, and powerful in his kinship relations—is the person who has the strongest social bonds and who is mourned for the longest. A very old man is given less time in his mourning ritual than a man in the prime of life because his lateral and ascending kinship bonds are less strong—that is, the relatives who provide these bonds have previously died. 182 765 554

The Murngin Soul in Life and in Death.—Each Murngin man and woman has two souls. One is looked upon as fundamental and real, and is felt to be the true soul, the soul from the heart, while the other is considered a trickster, of little value, and only in a vague way associated with the "true man." The first is the birimbir or warro, and the second is the mokoi or shadow soul. The warro is the totemic well 774 775

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spirit. It can be seen reflected in the water when one looks in it. It comes to one during good dreams. The warro, when a man dies, becomes "all the same as a fish." It lives with and in the totemic emblems. "He walks about with the ranga in the water down below in the well. Our old people reckon this way: he must be all the same as a fish because if a man's canoe tips over out in the middle water of the ocean that old relative's warro comes and helps us, saves our life and takes us up to the shore. If my son went out in the deep water with his canoe he would call out for Banitja [one of the totems of his clan]. After he had taken sweat from under his arm and spit into the water, then he would call out for the warro of his marikmo and mari. Those warros of his mari and marikmo would come all the same as a fish to help him. Warros swim and look like fish. When I look in the water he looks like me. Banitja and warros will also save a man from the sharks as well as from drowning. All the people have warros."

The trickster soul is called shadow soul before death and mokoi when it leaves the body and goes into the jungle and bush country. "Our old people reckon that the shadow soul is all the same as a bad spirit. It's that thing that makes me bad. My shadow always comes with me. The shadows of other things and creatures [beside man] are not souls but only shadows." The mokoi soul is supposed to live more or less all over the body. It is a kind of vague duplicate of it. Sometimes one is told that only the head of a man is made into a mokoi at his death and that mokoi has no body. In the pictures drawn of it and the representations made in the dances, the mokoi is always possessed of a body, but it is distorted and made to appear ugly and unpleasant.[1]

The warro is constantly undergoing change of status. It originates in the totem well, comes to its human father in a dream under miraculous circumstances where it is directed to its mother's womb, lodges there, is born in a normal number of months, and then lives in the heart of the new human organism during the period of the organism's life of the flesh unless it is stolen by a black sorcerer. After death there is a period of some indecision between the land of the living and the land of the dead, but it finally returns to the totemic well whence it came. It is in the symbol of the soul and its relations to the sacred and profane elements in Murngin civilization that we find mirrored the structure and values of the society. The soul supplies the eternal element to the cultural life of an individual Murngin. It lifts man from

[1] The Murngin ideas about the mokoi spirit are varied and somewhat confused.

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the simple profane animal level and allows him to participate fully in the sacred eternal values of the civilization that was, is, and will be. It finally and eternally ties the man whose heart it occupies to his totem, the symbol of all clan unity in Murngin culture, since the soul at death is one of the prominent elements in the configuration of associated items found in the clan's totemic water, the water which is the essence of life. Here live the great totemic ancestors who existed in the time of the Wawilak creator sisters when the Wongar totems walked the earth, and whose sacred names are used by the profane living only when these living have been purified by the great rituals, when they are part of the sacred and eternal elements in the culture, when man and his totems participate as one in the totemic rituals. Here, too, in the well, lie the totemic ancestors who died at the beginning of time, and the more recently dead whose emotional bonds with the living are still strong. The more recent ancestors who ave gone through the long purifying mortuary ritual which removed all the profane elements of the personality (whose mokoi spirit has gone into the bush with his other evil comrades) are, in their nature, of such sacredness that they can be absorbed into the body of the totem itself. And when the totemic essence of the totem animals is induced into the emblem, they also enter and participate in the spiritual life of the Murngin during the great rituals and then return to the sacred water hole. After the ritual, the emblem is buried beneath the mud of the totem well and allowed to rot, and the ancestor spirits and the totemic spirit return to the subterranean depths. Man goes through exactly the same cycle of existence as the totemic spirit. The totemic spirit enters into the sacred water hole, goes through the ordinary water at the top of the well into the subterranean depths, and finally into the totem water beneath, where the Wongar ancestors live, becoming a part of the sacred configuration. The soul does exactly the same thing.

The soul, the totemic spirit, the Wongar or totemic ancestors, are all expressions of the fundamental sacred essence, the ultimate symbol of which is the totemic well, which is the repository of all the individual items which have been or will be incarnate in man or his religious objects.

The kinship organization classifies the social elements of ordinary behavior. The primary kinship system regulates the basic behavior such as marriage, descent of children, gift-making, economic behavior, et cetera. The moiety and clan generalize and classify this detailed kinship behavior into larger patterns; and they also articulate the ordinary

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APPENDIX IV

DREAMS

DREAMS are always related to the extraordinary in Murngin experience. They are never expressive of the ordinary round of events but are definitely placed in the category of the supernatural. It is believed that when a man dreams his soul is moving about over the country away from the body and observing what is going on elsewhere. If, for example, he dreams of a fight in a distant country he believes the soul has been watching this fight in the far-distant country and reporting to his body what has happened. The various experiences that the man dreams are supposed to be those which his soul has been going through during his sleeping hours. During the hot afternoon the men frequently sleep in the shade, and if it becomes necessary to waken one of them, this is never done hurriedly but with great gentleness and care for fear that the soul will not have time to return to the body.

The soul, during these extra-corporeal experiences, is in a world where the totems, the unborn totemic children, and other extra-mundane creatures exist. The dreams in which the soul has all of its extraordinary experiences can be both beneficial and dangerous to the man or woman who dreams. Dreams by women would not fit into the general structure of Murngin society, since the world of the extraordinary is largely experienced by men. There is no doubt that women dream; but the social situation which would cause dreaming in men under many conditions would not exist for women, and if there were any ritual causation of dreaming it would be of a very weak kind.

It is necessary for a man to dream before his child is born. This dream is always of an extraordinary variety since the Murngin consider the child to have left its totem well and approached the father and asked him where it could find its mother. It is the father who directs the child to its mother; it then enters her womb, to be carried by her until birth.

Just before or during a great ceremony such as the Narra, Djungguan, or Gunabibi one or more of the participants is supposed to dream of a recently dead man who belonged to his totemic clan and who possessed the same totem. The power name of the man is then given to the totemic emblem which is to be used, which means to the Murngin that there is an identification between the man and the totem. This spiritualization of the dream to the level of the sacred totemic world finds expression in the fundamental myth in Murngin social organization, namely, the story of the two Wawilak

31 Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 O117 Murngin O117

climb to the top of the platform and, taking the corpse from those below, lay it on the bed of leaves,[15] face upwards.

As the two men descend, others blow a wooden trumpet informing the *Mokoi*[16] of the death, knowing that they will take the spirit from the locality for a time so that it will not be a danger to its living relatives. At the same time another man climbs a tall tree and makes a noise like the night-bird, *karawak* (associated with the *Mokoi*).[17] As soon as the aboriginal in the tree hears the *Mokoi* coming (they make a coughing sound) he descends quickly and with the rest of the mourners runs quickly from the burial ground. This is done, not only to make the dead man's spirit go with the *Mokoi*, but because the *Mokoi*, particularly that of the newly dead man, are dangerous to the living.

(ii). *The Cleansing of the Bones*

For the next two or three months no one goes to the burial platform. When, however, putrefaction is complete, the maggots from the body have entered the ground and turned into blowflies, the aborigines meet to perform the second phase in the burial rituals, the cleansing of the bones.[18]

Totemic dances belonging to the clan of the dead man are performed to the accompaniment of much singing, the beating of music sticks and the blowing of the wooden trumpet. The noise of these rituals is supposed to scare the spirit of the dead man and his ghostly attendants, the *Mokoi*, from the burial platform. The body is lifted from the platform or, if an earth burial, exhumed and a curious ritual performed over it, in which two men sit, one on either side of the corpse, whilst a third thrusts a spear into it, saying that he has speared a turtle.[19] The women, who have been sitting at one side, then come forward, take the skeleton apart, wash the bones in water and wrap them in paper-bark to remove the smell. At the end of three days the women unwrap the bones, rub them with red ochre and place them in a temporary bark coffin, on the outside of which the men have painted the totemic symbols of the deceased.[20]

15. If when a man dies there are only a few people present, the corpse is wrapped in paper bark and buried in the ground.

16. The *Mokoi (jinitpa)* and *Wuna (duo)* are spirits living in the jungle, who are always seeking souls of the newly-dead for company. A dead person has two spirits, one, *wakinu*, which finally goes to 'a distant "heaven" (p. 326) and one which stays on earth. The latter are the *Mokoi*. (See Warner (1937), p. 116; also p. 338.) There are, however, many kinds of *Mokoi*, and our information about them is very limited.

17. See ceremonial staff of *karawak*, Pl. 131E.

18. See description of bark coffins, p. 317.

19. The significance of this ritual is obscure. Warner (1937), p. 113, refers to it. A similar ritual is supposed to be carried out at Purelko, the final resting place of the *duo* dead, p. 327.

20. Frazer (1930), p. 5, mentions that, 'In Misol, a small island to the north-west of New Guinea, . . . the body, wrapped in clothes, is deposited on a scaffold built for it in the forest. From time to time the relations come to inspect the corpse until decomposition is complete. The skeleton is then brought to the place, generally a cave, where the bones of all the dead inhabitants of the village are collected.' This is a similar burial custom to that carried out by the aborigines of north-eastern Arnhem Land and might well be the source from which the Arnhem Land custom originated.

5: Webb M-5 (ca. 1930) 1934
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Spiritual Entities and Creation

Mali and Birrimbirr

[774] 775 Man is believed to possess two spiritual entities, the "Mali," or lesser spirit, and the "Birrimbirr," or spirit proper. When a person dies, the Mali for a time inhabits the accustomed haunts of the deceased, and then returns to the spirit centre of the [778] particular horde. Every one of these spirit centres includes a pool or spring of water, generally with trees and shrubs surrounding it, and the Mali is believed to enter either into the water or into one of the trees growing beside it. If one of these trees should be destroyed, it is believed that disaster will follow, for the destruction of the tree is regarded as equivalent to the destruction of the one whose Mali resides within it.

775 787 These Mali, or spirits, are believed to be reborn in successive generations of the people. The Mali comes to a man in a dream and says to him, "I want my mother." "Where shall I find my mother?" The man, still in the dream, replies, "Your mother is there." and directs it to his wife. The Mali enters the woman, and later on is reborn into the life of the tribe. Always, when a man so dreams, he passes through some peculiar experience, the significance of which is not realised until afterwards.

For example, a man known to me was one day looking for food along the beach when he saw a fish of a rare, deep-sea variety floating in a most unusual way. This fish he captured and took back to the camp, where he recounted to his companions the circumstances under which he had found it. Other men present refused to partake of it, professing that they were not hungry. This man himself did, and then lay down and slept. While he slept he dreamed that a child spirit came to him in the manner indicated, but he did not associate the two facts until later, when he realised that his wife was to give birth to a child. He was then told by the other men who had been present on the previous occasion that they had refused to eat the fish because they knew

5: Webb M-5 (ca. 1930) 1934
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it was not an ordinary fish, but was being used by the child spirit as a means of approaching its prospective father.

The Mali is shared by man with the whole of the lesser creation. Every living creature, every tree, the very ground itself has its Mali. There can be no existence apart from this spiritual quality.

After death the Birrimbirr, or spirit proper, is believed to pass on to Buralkor, the spirit world, which is believed to exist on this world plane away beyond the sun-rising. In this world there are two regions, one good, the other bad, but the spirit's ultimate destination is in no sense determined on ethical grounds. Reaching Buralkor, the spirit once again becomes clothed in physical form, and life goes on as it is lived here.

Creation

In the dim dawn days of the world, previous to the existence of men and women as they are found to-day, the world was peopled by a race of semi-human, semi-animal creatures, who were intimately concerned with the origin of the social and ceremonial life of the people. Some of the descendants of these creatures developed into purely animal forms, and others into humans, and many of the "bungals," or open ceremonies, of the people consist of a dramatic recounting of their doings. Behind these there existed certain demi-gods, who were the agents of creation and the ancestors of the present tribal groups. From them the various ceremonial totems were received, and by them the social organisation was established.

Back of these again is the hazy conception of a great spirit known as "Wungarr," by whom the actual agents of creation are believed to have been commissioned and sent forth. The term "Wungarr" is also applied to the dream days of pre-history. By far the most important of these beliefs are those which centre round "Kaitchalan," who is conceived of as a great serpent inhabiting a pool in the upper reaches of the Woolen River. This great creature is believed to have devoured two women who were the most important of the agents of creation, so usurping their powers, and making himself the originator of tribal organisation, social laws and customs, and ceremonial life.

Although regarded as in a special sense the ancestor of a certain totemic group of hordes, the power and influence of Kaitchalan are recognised and accepted by all divisions of the tribe.

114 as they came, making ritual-totemic wells or centres, and giving
773 birth to the ancestors of the present people. They made and carried
796 sacred totemic emblems, and instituted the Narra ritual in which these are used; but some Dreamtime men stole the baskets in which they kept these objects and performed the Narra—a theft which the Djunkgao took in good grace (pp. 336–40).

[114] As we read these myths and the description of the associated
773 rituals, we detect a difference, at least in emphasis, in the rôles played
562 by women in the creative epoch in this region as compared with other regions for which we have reliable information. According to the classic works of Spencer and Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* (1899) and *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia* (1904), and the later work of Carl Strehlow, *Die Aranda-und Loritja-Stamme in Zentral-Australien*, I, II and III, 1907, 1908, 1910, human beings arose from semi-human-animal forbears, or were given their forms in an operation performed by "self-existent" totemic beings on existing incomplete beings; and in some cases, too, in the more northern tribes, human beings just arose. There is no instance of one or two great culture-heroines being held responsible for natural features, tribes and languages, though women were included in many of the earliest groups of human wanderers; more explicitly the Unmatjera have a tradition of several groups of *ertwaininga* women who wandered across the country, carrying yamsticks, and leaving individuals behind at various spots, which became spirit totemic centres, from which these individuals went forth to be reincarnated.

In the sphere of ritual, however, the myths reflect a stage or period in which women took an active part and had full knowledge of sacred symbols. Thus, in one myth, three women from time to time painted themselves with sacred designs, carried the nurtunja (a sacred symbol), performed ceremonies and changed their totemic and subsection affiliations. In another, the Unthippa women in the course of their wanderings, used to carry off and circumcize any novices they found, an event to which reference is still made in circumcision ritual (*Native Tribes*, pp. 195–6, 433, 441–3; *Northern Tribes*, pp. 146, 150, 152–9).

171 If we compare the mythology of the centre and north-centre with
773 that of Arnhem Land as we knew it in 1937, we see that in both the
562 spirits of men and women pre-exist because of happenings in the
[774] Dreamtime, and women in that period played an inner rôle in what is now ritual reserved for initiated men. In the former vast regions, however, women did not form the country, name natural species, determine the tribal and linguistic divisions, nor institute ceremonies But this is just what the culture heroines of Arnhem Land were said to have done. This difference in power, or in degree of function, was sufficient to suggest further research in this region into the rôle of the

796 [775] it went to his Dreaming or spirit home to wait for the return of the animating spirit after the death and final burial of the individual.

Further, because of the original life-giving power of the "Mother", [789] the ritual which included many dances referring to natural species, was believed to ensure the normal cycle of the seasons. This, however, did not occur directly as though the effect of increase rites, for the ritual was not regarded as such; but just as, and while, men performed their ritual in the "Mother Place" to ensure their own births [774] and rebirths, so the "shades" of natural species performed their own increase rites in the spirit-world.

The details on which this brief analysis was based suggested that [777] the Kunapipi ritual as described by Professor Warner as part of the Wawilak cycle and as having come from the south through the Rainbarngo (Rembaranga) tribe (p. 452), was a most important cultural element in Arnhem Land, the "pure" form of which must be sought along the line of the "southern" rivers such as the Roper, Katherine and Victoria.

177 In 1946, I worked for a short period amongst the tribes on the Roper and Katherine and also visited north-east Arnhem Land, and 773 in 1947 and 1948 worked amongst the Mangarai and Alawa on the 796 Roper, and the Djauan and southern Rembaranga in southern [114] Arnhem Land. While at Yirrkalla near Cape Arnhem in the north-east corner of the region I saw the ceremonial ground with the Nanggoru and Kanala where a Kunapipi ritual had been held some weeks earlier, and obtained information which showed that it had there coalesced with the Wauwalak (or Wawilak) myth, the very "hut", in which the two sisters and the baby were swallowed by *Muit* (Yurlunggur or Julunggul) the snake, being an important feature in the ritual. Moreover, the tradition, as given to me, was that Moit, that is the Wauwalak ritual, spreading south was met somewhere about the Rose River –Nungubuyu tribal country –by the Kunapipi ritual. For the people there, being afraid of his swallowing habits, killed him, and made their own *mumuna*, Mother Dreaming. The result is the present Kunapipi, with the Yermalindji—the Mother's yam stick, and at the same time the Rainbow Snake's symbol—and the Anggoru, the Mother's earth womb.

It was quite clear then that by 1946 the Kunapipi ritual had [114] reached Arnhem Bay, and had done so since early 1929, for Professor Warner wrote (p. 452) that it was not found in any of the clans around Arnhem and Buckingham Bays, or on the islands of the north-east though large numbers of the men from these districts went south to take part in ritual with the clans of the same general linguistic group who did possess it. Further, I was told in 1946 at Elcho Island that a local man, Kumu, had brought the Kunapipi in about 1929 to Elcho and other islands from Caledon Bay where he saw it.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
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sexual intercourse with the obvious representatives of the "Mother" enable her to fulfil her important function.

Thus, here as in the Ancient East, ritual sex-intercourse is a sacramental act in the cult of the "Great Mother", on which her potency and the survival of man and nature depend. In both regions we are in the presence of a "Mystery Religion". The precious guarded secret is only revealed to the initiated, the twice born, and that secret, that "mystery", is the continuity of life. Life, however, is no mere visible or external phenomenon. In all its forms it has a spiritual counterpart, its "shade". The Cult Mother is more than the Big Woman of the mythological period; she is eternal in the earth, and present and active in her "shade" form in every Kunapipi. The Great Snake, too, Muit or Yermalindji, is present in his symbols at the ceremony, teaching the "reborn" through the traditional words and ritual behaviour of the elders, speaking through them even as the prophet and teacher is the voice of his God. The ritual or "wood" shade, the spirit double of the initiand enters the bullroarer symbol of the Mother and with it remains in her "earth womb" until it goes to the spirit home. While the actors perform their rites to ensure the birth and rebirth of mankind and the "increase" of the Great Mother and the Great Snake as manifested in the rains and the consequent fertility of the earth, the spirit-womb of the Mother is made potent; in addition, as they represent in mime the behaviour of animals, reptiles, birds and insects, the "shades" of these creatures perform the increase ceremonies of their own kind in their own ritual places in the spirit-sphere. Finally, the women who have co-operated in the Kunapipi with their "outside" calls, responses, songs and dance (like the Bundami or Awalambi), and who then take part in the ritual intercourse with men from the Mother Place, become bearers of the latters' ritual or Kunapipi "shades"; at least, such is the doctrine in the Roper River region.

So life is assured to man and nature for it is eternal in the spirit world, in the Great Mother who brings forth and whose impregnating symbol is the Great Snake, the iridescent rainbow which never fails to join the sky to the earth.

Such is the appeal of the cult. Its function in the social and economic life of a food-gathering people in a tropical environment can be studied, and indeed is obvious and logical. A most valuable attempt to analyse the North-East Arnhem Land cults from this point of view has already been made by Professor W. L. Warner in *A Black Civilization*. But why should such a Fertility Goddess cult arise in Arnhem Land and the Victoria River region, and not also in the northern part of the Kimberley Division or in Cape York Peninsula, where the tropical seasons and conditions of living for a parasitic food-gathering people are similar? The answer probably lies in the differences in external contacts. Here it is sufficient to say

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
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Several aspects should perhaps be mentioned in this *Preface*, since they throw new light on the study of Aboriginal religion. 121 771

Throughout the greater part of the Northern Territory the concept of a Fertility Mother is found. She is the direct or indirect inspiration of all religious thought and activity. She is the central theme of the Kunapipi ceremonies. Indeed, Kunapipi is one of her sacred names. Her "eternal" presence throws new light on the philosophy of totemism in the region, for it was she, herself without a totem, who brought the totems into being. Animals, birds, reptiles, Spirits, inanimate objects, physiographic features, became totemic through her divine influence and association, or because they served some purpose in relation to her "eternal" rôle of creator, cause of birth and rebirth and seasonal fluctuations. In the Kunapipi then, the totem bears the sacred imprint of its religious or mythological connection with the Mother. In this region, therefore, the study of totemism is a means to an end: and that end, where we have any detailed knowledge, is the Mother herself, existing as a divine Being serving as an explanation of religious thought, belief and behaviour. 771 776

This leads to the realm of the sacred, but the problem of the demarcation between the sacred and the profane, and of the part played by women in sacred ritual, particularly in the Kunapipi itself, needs to be considered far more intensively than is possible here.

Religious thought and action permeate the whole of an indigenous society, and are not manifested only on the sacred ceremonial ground when groups meet for the performance of ritual. Therefore, it is sometimes difficult to separate the sacred from the profane. A man or woman does not receive sacred power directly or indirectly from the Sacred Mother only on the ceremonial ground, through the performance of ritual. He, or she, possesses innately a sacred or divine essence, which exists apart from any external coercion: whatever his or her degree of participation in the sacred collective rites, this personal germ of sacredness remains intact, and cannot be destroyed even by death. It seems probable however that this individual germ, which may perhaps be described as a person's own sacred aura, may be intensified on the occasion of religious ceremonies. The spirit of a man (or woman) is derived directly from the Sacred Mother; his bones themselves are possessed of a sacred quality, being likened to the *rangga* emblems associated with the great ancestral Beings; and he himself bears "inside" (sacred) and "outside" (secular) personal names, which are in many cases of sacred origin. 121 771 778 [774]

Women have a far greater part to play in sacred religious ceremonies than has hitherto been observed. This is particularly the case in north-eastern Arnhem Land; and in the performance of the Kunapipi they are directly responsible for the efficacy of a whole series of ceremonies. Because they do not take part in all the rituals of a particular cult, this does not mean that they are excluded or are 121 562 771 776

14: Thomson E-5 (1935-1943) 1961 Oll7 Murngin Oll7

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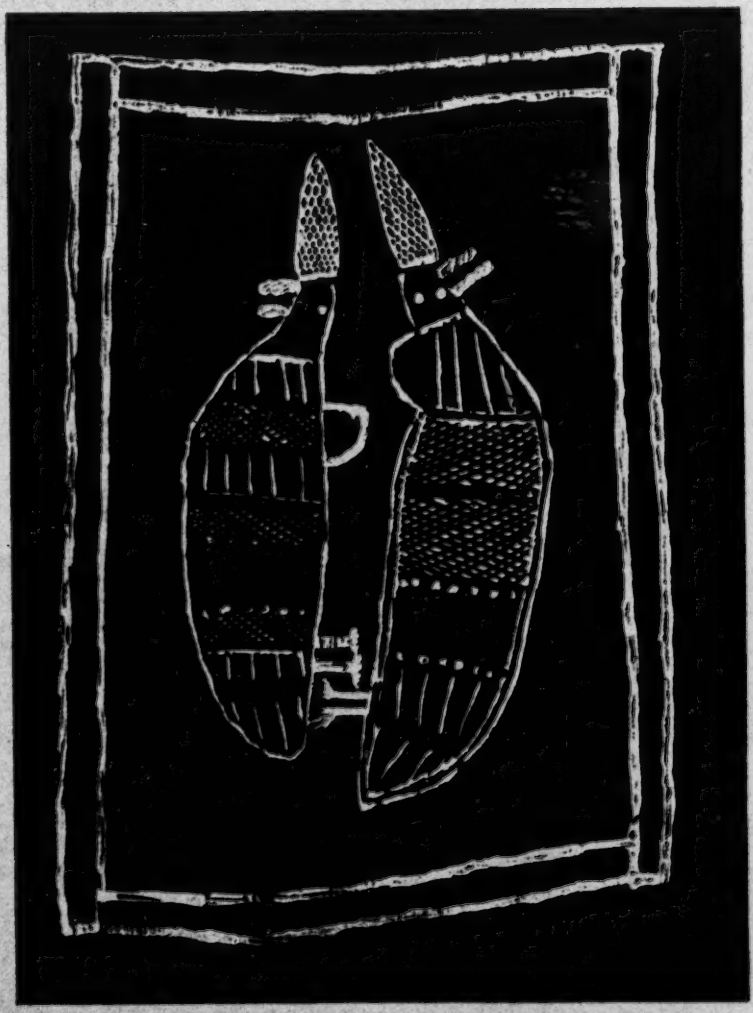

THE TWO 'MARRNGIT' OF MEDICINEMAN WATTIYA, DRAWN BY HIMSELF

Left, the spirit familiar Barramawai, right, Kanyirningo. The white, cross-hatched areas on the heads of the figures represent hair, the lateral projection ears, and the two small circles on the neck region eyes; the cross-hatching on the bodies represents body hair (dauwur, as distinct from marra, the ha of the head). Wattiya said: that each marrngit has a stone (kunda) embedded in its sternum (kunnan), which provides its driving force, and that th footis distinct from its mart, spiritual power; that the stone is 'like the wing of a bird' (nakun binkar warrakan); that they represent the mal shadow or shade, 'half' birimbir, nakun morkoi,' i.e. 'half spirit, like a ghost, like the ghost from a dead person; and, in explanation of their way movement, 'it does not go on foot' (yakka diango djalkirri mariji).

754
[224 on the eyes, cheeks and arm of a hunter to make him alert
789] and far-seeing—*mel karrkuluk*—and so to aid him in sighting and approaching game that is difficult to kill, [554] success with which brings prestige to a hunter. The blood drawn by a *ragalk* from his victim, or the flesh taken from [778] the body of a man whose death has been brought about by a sorcerer, has special potency in magic. It is regarded as dangerous, *duya*—tabu in a ritual sense by virtue of its *marr*—*marr dal* (*marr*, spiritual power, *dal*, strong). It must therefore be eaten only with due observance of ritual precautions. In the case of a young man or uninitiated boy, human flesh, particularly flesh from the victim of a *kalka*, may be given to him only by an old man who first applies [789 his own axillary sweat to the mouth, face and throat of
784] the novice so that he will not become sick, and thus ensures that he receives the benefit of the *marr* without the danger that he would otherwise incur. On no account may a boy or a young man touch this flesh or blood with his own hands.

774 Meanwhile the victim of the *kalka* lies unconscious and
754 is declared by the natives to be dead. They say that his *malli*—his ghost—remains with the body, but that his *birimbir* departs. The *birimbir* is very near to our idea of the soul. It resides originally with the *malli ranga*, the spirit or spirit-manifestation of the totem which remains always in the *wangarr kapu manotji*, the totemic well or water hole where it swam until it entered the mother's body at conception. When the *birimbir* leaves the body of the victim of the *kalka*, my informants said that it returned to the *kapu manotji*. And they added: 'All same he die.' It is as if the man has died. For when a man dies his *birimbir* returns as described above, to the *kapu manotji* from which it came and swims there until it is again reincarnated.

754 The *kalka* now proceeds to restore his victim to life.
278 He takes a white stone from his dilly bag. First he rubs on
824 the body the mucilage of an orchid called *djalkurk*, *Dendrobium dicuphum*, and then warms the stone, which he places on the sore—*tji'tji*—or on the victim's chest. He warms the stone again and now places it on the *maiyang* (throat) and chest. Then he draws the skin back into place, heats the stone again and places it on his victim's cheeks, supplementing the stone with the blade of his *mangal*—spear-thrower. My informants said that the penis of the victim is erect, the tongue hanging out and the bowel prolapsed, and each of these organs has to be treated and replaced in position. Sometimes one of the *kalka* will climb a nearby tree and break down the leafy nest of a green tree ant (*Œcophylla virescens*)—which exudes a strong, pungent odour of formic acid and is believed by the natives to have some therapeutic value. The *kalka* scatters these ants over the prolapsed intestine, which my informant declared to be effective in causing it to retract.

754 It was a matter of surprise to me to find a number of men who were in possession of the *kandjurma*, which are the stock-in-trade of the *ragalk*, admitted to membership of the cult, and were even willing to demonstrate to me their technique in dealing with a victim.

The natives do not pretend that a man subjected to treatment by *kalka* in the manner described is afterwards

[p.101 (A)]

754 unaware of what has happened to him, but they assert that because of their magic he is unable to tell of his experiences when he returns to camp, although he knows that he is doomed, and prepares to die.

After a more or less prolonged treatment to restore the victim and to cover external evidence of his work, particularly in obliterating the tracks to the place where the body lay, the *kalka* wraps leaves—any leaves—around the hook of the spear-thrower and waves it over the prostrate body of his victim, especially over his head. The victim stirs. My informant simulated the groans and grunts of a man awakening from a heavy sleep.

As he recovers consciousness, the victim thinks 'I have slept deeply.' He thinks 'I have slept too much.' Meanwhile the *ragalk* has hidden himself behind a tree.

'I think somebody has killed me,' *i.e.* worked magic. The *kalka* now springs out from behind the tree and frightens his victim, telling him that he is doomed and that he will die. The victim recognizes the *kalka* and threatens to kill him. He hooks his spear on his spear-thrower but he misses again and again. He has lost heart. He returns to camp, intending to tell his kin what has happened so that they can avenge him. The *kalka*, joined now by his confederates, waylays the victim, and again harries and intimidates him. The man returns to camp but is unable to tell what has happened to him. In two or three days he [152] falls sick. He feels cold and lies all the time close to a fire. He is resigned to his fate and calling his kin around him he says, 'I am going to finish' (I am going to die).

756 The people, who jump to conclusions, ready to see the *kalka's* work, call on the *marrngitmirri* who holds him tightly, examining his body. He sees sores—the *malli* of the wounds made by the *kandjurma*—and he sees that the heart blood has been drained. If the *marrngitmirri* is not sure, not ready to accept responsibility for his diagnosis, he will call in others of his cult, or he will wait until [776] evening, when his *marrngit* return to him. These often leave the medicinemen during the day and return to them at night. The *marrngit* sit on his shoulders or in the *matji-tji* [145] (biting bag), a net basket made from strings and filled tightly with down feathers or with down (*ramman*). The *matji-tji* is slung around the neck and hangs down on the chest by a string. It is carried by men during formal ordeals called *makarratta*, and when fighting in single combat, when they put it in their mouths and clamp their teeth on it. *Matji-tji* are often worn by *marrngitmirri* and provide a place of refuge for their *marrngit*. The *marrngitmirri*, after initiation to the cult, is able to see his *marrngit* and talk to them. The people living in the same camp, although unable to see the *marrngit*, claim that they can hear the *kaindjarr*—the sound of swift motion—caused by their wings, or more accurately, since not all use wings as motive power, the sound of motion. The *marrngitmirri* [774, 761] claim to be able to detect the work of *ragalk*, but not to heal their victims, because their heart blood has been drained, the *birimbir* has departed and their internal organs [776, 757] injured or removed.

In the years that I lived with the natives in Arnhem Land I frequently saw the *marrngitmirri* at work. He claims

remaining with him all night. None of the medicinemen that I met in east Arnhem Land claimed to have a single *marngit* only, and the number varied from two to four or five or even more, as in the case of Wilindjango, who had six (Plate Jb).

The *marngitmirri*, as he gains experience in the cult, is able to see on the body of a victim of secret killing spear wounds which are not visible to ordinary people.

As the drawings in colour in Plates I and J indicate, there is a considerable variation in the concepts of the *marngit* entertained by the *marngitmirri*, but all agreed that these are *wakkinngu*—profane, in the sense of non-sacred, with the special implication that they are not associated with, or dedicated to, the *wangarr*, and so not subject to ritual or supernatural sanctions. The *marngit* and their cult are regarded, therefore, by the natives of Arnhem Land as apart altogether from totemism. This essential distinction was pointed out to me by my informants themselves. They emphasized it frequently by referring to their *marngit* as *warrakan*—animals—a term that they never used for their totems, except in reference to the actual animal form which the totems sometimes assumed in ancestral times—for, being *wangarr*, they had supernatural powers and were not subject to the restrictions and limitations of ordinary men. They were *wangarr*, hence supernatural.

The people always described their totems as *malli wangarr*—the spirits or shades of the ancestral culture heroes—and therefore, *yarkomirri*, literally with, or having, a name, dedicated ceremonially to the *wangarr*. On ceremonial occasions the obligatory presentations of *ngata* (food) are dedicated to the *wangarr* concerned by the *dalkarramirri*, who acts in the role of high priest. And because of their association with the *wangarr*, all totems or totemic objects are subject to supernatural sanctions and are still watched over by the *malli* of these *wangarr* who guard jealously the observance of the rituals associated with the heritage that they left behind.

The demarcation between what is sacred and what is profane, between *yarkomirri* and *wakkinngu*, emphasizes the recognition by these people of the essential distinction between *marngit* and totem, between religion and magic.

Notes

[1] The data presented in the paper were obtained when I was under commission by the Commonwealth Government in Arnhem Land, prior to the war, and during the war while O.C. Northern Territory Coastal Patrol and the Special Reconnaissance Unit, Norforce.

[2] *Oceania*, Vol. I, 1936, pp. 336–47.

[3] See Donald F. Thomson, 'Two Painted Skulls from Arnhem Land, with Notes on the Totemic Significance of the Designs.' MAN, 1939, 1.

[4] *Tortork* is heart in the strictly anatomical sense, but some of my informants declared that it was also the seat of the *malli*, or shade, a kind of non-material or spiritual manifestation, which has nothing to do with the shadow.

[p.102(B)]

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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so it is with man's spirit. Moreover, according to native psychology, a man has two souls, and according to some beliefs, it is a man's bush or trickster spirit which goes to the Island of the Dead. But however that be, the more important of these two spirits of the dead does sojourn in the totemic well, and to make sure that the spirit arrives there, signs are made by pointing and singing to the grandfather to come for him. As one informant told Dr Warner, who studied the subject intensively, 'if we didn't sing, he might go bad because evil ghosts might catch him and take him out in the jungle country where they live. It is better that his old grandfather and his ancestors come and get him and take him straight to his clan well where his totem came from.'

Religion

Readers of Mr Chaseling's book will be impressed by the important part played by religion in the life of the Aborigines. Mythology and ritual, totemism and beliefs regarding the spirit of man, the Great Creator Spirit who is revealed in the Rainbow Serpent, and the 'mother goddess', are all part of this religious life. The ritual is the prescribed acting of the great myths by fully initiated men; the mythology provides the sanction and pattern for the rites and for present-day behaviour. The emphasis on the Creator Spirit (associated with the sky) and a kind of 'earth-mother' distinguished Arnhem Land from Central Australian mythology, though interest in the sky-world and a belief that it is the source of life-giving powers (especially through the Rainbow Serpent and the medicine-men), were widespread in Australia. Mr Chaseling's Chapter 17 shows how the natives of his region are fascinated by the sky-world and in their mythology reveal a desire to go to it.

Further details of north-east Arnhem Land myth and ritual are given in W. L. Warner's *A Black Civilization*. He also discusses fully the totemism of the region. A general

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Black Magic

STONE AGE man's credulity and dark dubiety lead to the use of magic in everyday life. Specialized workers in evil magic are called 'raggalk', but astonishing powers are also credited to many men and women who claim to make wind and rain and to bring about the deaths of enemies. Aspiring raggalk are initiated by old witch-doctors, who do it for a consideration. The pupil is asked if he wishes to do a special killing or general training in all branches of black magic. When this nice distinction has been made the lesson proceeds.

A raggalk told me that both mentor and pupil search for an unsuspecting Yulengor, whom the raggalk kills with a spear-thrust between the ribs; he is killed in this particular way to simplify the draining of his blood. When the victim dies, the raggalk enlarges the wound and draws out the small intestines and buries them, meantime catching the blood in a bark container. Heart-blood is kept by the raggalk to assist him in hunting and to ensure health and good luck, and when he is making totemic emblems he swallows some of it to increase his skill. Such powers come from the lesser spirit of the victim, which is trapped in the blood and can be controlled by the raggalk. Eventually however the raggalk makes the fatal mistake of relying entirely on this ghost to warn him of danger, and when a killing-party comes to avenge the death of the victim, the ghost deserts him and joins the avengers.

Raggalk say that when the blood and organs have been removed, they wash and massage the body to arrest rigor-mortis and 'soften' it before bringing it back to life. To

754 food in fire made from a certain shrub; as the heat increases his throat swells till he dies. The trouble can be cured only [755] by finding the fire and pouring water on it. If a spear or spear-thrower is broken and burnt, the owner's hands become crippled and twisted by rheumatism. A saccule or bark drinking-cup also provides means for injuring the one who drank from it, for if a pronged fish-spear is stabbed into it the victim's throat swells till he dies. Maleirpa the leper had lost most of his fingers and toes long before his misfortune was attributed to magic, but someone idly recalled that, years previously, Bulambi had followed Maleirpa's footprints along a beach and had aimlessly dropped the point of his pronged fish-spear into them. Obviously Maleirpa's toes had dropped off in consequence. As the victim did not die immediately, Bulambi was not [683] killed, but when the afflicted one finally succumbs, Bulambi will need to make restitution to his next-of-kin by the gift of a canoe, an axe, or spears. Meanwhile Bulambi, the leper, and his brothers fraternize and hunt happily together.

789 'Nyirrah' is specialized magic connected with the making
787 of wind and rain, the poisoning of food before it is eaten, and the controlling of a woman's desires so that she can be made to desert her husband and follow the man of Nyirrah. Such magic comes to a man in a dream, by instruction from another Yulengor or by direct bestowal from the Nyirrah spirit-centre. When the body is asleep human spirits are free to roam and converse, and then a spirit with Nyirrah powers [774] may invite another to see him kill a man or make rain. A [778] more direct method is to go inland to a mythical tree from which Nyirrah powers are dispensed. Approaching the tree the man hears the beating of clap-sticks, and their very invisibility proves that spirits inhabit the tree. If he is brave enough to go nearer Nyirrah will automatically come upon him.

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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have killed him.' At other times the marrngeit is called to examine the body and reconstruct the crime, for by his supernatural powers he can see the marks of the alleged wound, and by sleight of hand he pulls it open to prove his case. He can see the ghost of the killer lurking near the victim's body, or if the body has been disposed of he can still name the killer by an examination of the victim's armlet, spear, or footprints. 754 761 787

Birrinjauwoi of Milingimbi died from pleurisy and was buried before a marrngeit could be brought to examine him. His ornaments and personal possessions were therefore put aside for the autopsy, but when a trickle of moisture came from the lips of the corpse it was hailed as the best specimen of all and was taken to the marrngeit. This marrngeit was a wise man and talked to them and asked questions till he felt sure of their feelings, and then dramatically named the 'killer'.

A youth was killed somewhere in the hills behind Blue Mud Bay, and within three days we heard of it from messengers who ran with the news to us at Yirrkala. They called on the relatives to organize a revenge party, and personal possessions from the corpse were shown and small parts of his flesh distributed. In the emotion which flamed through the country, wailing women incited their men to vengeance. I was reminded of the biblical story of an ancient Hebrew tribe which received parts of a body that had been carved up and sent amongst them to cry for vengeance, and they swept over the hills of Palestine to exterminate a related horde. 628 765

Relics from a dead man are known as 'maiyabala', and consist of finger joints, small bones, fragments of the spear embedded in the body, dried blood, skin, flesh, hair, or ornaments. They are given to relatives as reminders of their obligation to exact blood vengeance and by the very acceptance of them the pact is scaled. A victim's lesser spirit 774 789 765

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794 accompanies the maiyabala to assist in locating and
789 killing the murderer. Maiyabala are often carried in the
765 mouth, in totemic dilly-bags, or rolled in bees wax and tied round the neck. They give extra strength and skill to the wearers and guide them to the enemy, who, in turn, is made unwary and tired.

765 Raiwola told me that he had accepted such a maiyabala
628 but for years his vow remained unfulfilled. Then one day after a long kangaroo hunt in the rain he stood warming himself by a fire with several other men, amongst whom chanced to be the killer of his relative. Without a word Raiwola plunged his spear into him, and in reply to the astounded questions of the huntsmen, he produced his maiyabala as proof that it had been done in settlement of the old debt.

726 It is rarely left to one man to avenge a death, for in the
628 heat of emotion that follows a killing the relatives go in a body to exact vengeance. Killing-parties are known as
[201] 'merringor', and their appropriate sign in the sign-language is wiping the open palm down over the face to suggest their ruthlessness in wiping out men, women, and children. In feverish passion, and with maiyabala and totemic dilly-bags slung from their necks, merringor lose all fear and travel relentlessly till they are lean and exhausted. They daub their
[302] bodies with white clay, a practice which plainly indicates their intentions, they creep silently on their enemies, and with wild yells they hurl their spears into the sleeping groups. Such raids are seldom bloodless, and more deaths result from these attacks than from all other forms of violence.

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551 the distinction, and when I forgot the new name and used the old one she remained naïvely silent till correctly addressed.

775 Appropriate names are given to wandering ghosts, though 'mali', 'morquoi' and 'warru' are the most comon. Mali [192] and morquoi are also used for reflections in water or in a mirror, and warru is applied to any shade or shadow. Ghosts roam at will, hunting and fishing, gathering yams and cooking them; strange events, unaccountable fires, a falling tree, and unrecognizable footprints can all be attributed to mali. At times a mali deserts a skeleton and hovers round a mother's camp, and should she find that her food has disappeared, she is happy in the belief that her dead child's shadow came to her when hungry.

'Birrimbirr' is the second spirit found in every individual. ●[774] Birrimbirr come from the spirit world of Buralkor, and at death relatives urge them to return there. Irrespective of the life lived on earth, birrimbirr return to Buralkor, and good and bad spirits live there in hordes as they do on earth.

[776] Buralkor lies beyond the rising sun and is the home of the [821] Great Spirit who sent out the first creative Ancestresses. The sun comes from the spirit land and goes back again each night to suckle her infant. On its flight to Buralkor a spirit first sees a cloud rising from the sea and later it resolves itself into a dense jungle with every leaf holding a sparkling dewdrop. On approaching the trees, the birrimbirr finds an opening, and a plover guides it through the branches to the camp of its horde's spirits, where it is welcomed and it settles down to a happy life of hunting. Birrimbirr are able to see what is taking place on earth, and from time to time they hear earthly relatives calling for help and for them to go and pilot in another spirit.

765 With both mali and birrimbirr safely disposed of, the bones are smeared with red-ochre, and involved totemic symbols